

# VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA  
GREEK ORTHODOX COMMUNITY OF ST GEORGE, BRISBANE  
APOSTOLIKI DIAKONIA

## CONTENTS

Paschal Message, 2000.....	2
From the Editor:	
<i>How to Boil A Frog Alive</i> .....	4
Pascha: Share the Joy! .....	6
Daily Vitamins .....	8
Faith-The Struggle of our Century .....	9
Communicating the Faith .....	12
News .....	16
Pearls of the Inner Mysteries .....	24
What Would You Do? .....	26
Book Review .....	28
Bible facts:	
<i>What about all those contradictions?</i> .....	31



"WONDROUS IS GOD  
IN HIS SAINTS"

## Calendar of Feast Days

1 July .....	Sts Cosmas & Damian
7 July .....	St Kyriaki the Great Martyr
8 July .....	St Procopios the Great Martyr
11 July .....	St Euphemia the Great Martyr
16 July .....	Sunday of the Holy Fathers
17 July .....	St Marina the Holy Martyr, St Veronica the Martyr
20 July .....	The Prophet Elias
23 July .....	St Phocas the Holy Martyr Ezekiel the Prophet
24 July .....	St Christina the Holy Martyr
25 July .....	Repose of St Anna
26 July .....	St Paraskevi
27 July .....	St Panteleimon the Martyr
1 August .....	The Fast of the Theotokos begins
6 August .....	The Transfiguration of Our Lord
13 August .....	St Maximos the Confessor
15 August .....	The Dormition of the Theotokos
29 August .....	Beheading of John the Baptist (strict fast)
31 August .....	Depositing of the Holy Belt of the Theotokos
1 Sept .....	St Symeon (beginning of the Church year)
8 Sept .....	The Nativity of Theotokos
14 Sept .....	The Exaltation of the Life-giving Cross



# PASCHAL MESSAGE, 2000

STYLIANOS

By the grace of God Archbishop of Australia  
To all the Clergy and devout faithful of our Greek Orthodox Archdiocese  
Brother Concelebrants and children in the Lord,

*"We celebrate the death of death,  
the destruction of Hades, the beginning of an everlasting life,  
and with leaps of joy we praise Him  
Who is the cause thereof..." (Easter hymn).*



If this doxological cry of the Church, which has mocked death for so many centuries, still expresses our true faith, rather than simply being a blind reverberation of outmoded 'structures'. Then we should also express today - yet more extensively and more plainly - our unwavering faith in the immortality of life, while at the same time touching upon the mortality of death.

However, it is not an easy matter to make a strong 'confession' today about what 'life' is and about what 'death' is. This cannot happen in a neutral manner, through the apparently pious repetition of stereotypical expressions taken from the language of worship.

Such a 'conventional' confession may of course be less painful, as it does not bring with it the dangers of gross misinterpretation, so often reprehended by malevolent people as being 'heresy'. Yet it nevertheless remains unconvincing. It is not vibrant. It is, not a 'witness of faith' in our own words, capable of consoling the 'age-old dead ends' of the human person, and of leading us from death to life.

This transition from death to life, this 'passage', is, as we know, precisely and literally what 'Pascha' is. Christ stated this directly when saying: "he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgement, but has passed from death into life" (John 5:24).

However, we must risk our 'comfort' and our 'good name' in order to speak responsibly today about 'life' and 'death', after 2000 years of preaching and witness - which were unfortunately unable to 'pacify' Christians collectively, and to attract non-Christians with the powerful words 'come and see'. In other words, we must walk 'on a high wire'. This at any rate was always the opinion of the Fathers who said 'to be Orthodox is to walk on a tightrope'.

The first thing we should say very clearly in relation to life and death is that, neither does the one signify an isolated positive value (life), nor does the other signify an equally isolated negative value (death). They do not refer to individual realities having only one dimension, as many others do, such as, for example, 'light', 'darkness', 'oxygen', and 'nitrogen'.

Rather, 'life' and 'death' are a whole way of viewing and experiencing all beings and all happenings. A multidimensional fact, then, with many meanings, which you either enjoy within an increasing scale of 'blessedness' - which is 'life' - or else you are deprived of it in a corresponding scale of 'pain' - which is 'death'.

Just as when we speak of 'life', we mean various levels of experiencing the light, in the

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same way, when we speak of 'death', we are also expressing a scale of trials of darkness. We therefore have biological, social, cultural and spiritual life, just as we have biological and spiritual death.

This is why it would be naive and blasphemous to understand 'life' as only meaning the biological commotion of chemical actions and reactions in the physical body. It would be equally naive and blasphemous to identify the notion of death only with the 'disintegration' and 'breaking down' of the material 'workshop' which medicine calls the human 'organism'.

It is therefore clear that the 'resurrection' that Christ safeguards for us, through His voluntary bodily death, does not mean the abolishment of biological death. Otherwise, how could we explain until this day the need for Cemeteries and Hospitals? On the contrary, the Resurrection of Christ marks the final victory over spiritual death, namely sin, which had separated us from God.

Following that victory, biological death no longer presents itself as a threat of final bankruptcy, an abominable 'Minus' of nihilism. Biological death is now revealed as being a blessed and unexpected 'Plus', a provision of the boundless love of God "so that what is evil does not become immortal".

This is the meaning of the words "by death trampling upon death", despite all worldly 'logic'.

Consequently, when we confess together with the Apostle Paul and all other faithful that "He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus" (2 Cor. 4:14), we are not thereby expressing an expectation that we will return to biological life. Let us not forget that St. Paul who preached that the 'Resurrection' is the cornerstone of our faith - declaring that "if Christ is not risen, then your faith is in vain" (1 Cor. 15:17) - also stated equally categorically concerning the 'stomach' and 'foods' that God "will destroy both it and them" (1 Cor. 6:13).

Our bodies, therefore, will be resurrected. But they will no longer be the flesh of decay and sin. They will be almost bodiless bodies, something like the 'bodiless' angels. For they will be 'spiritual' bodies. 'Deified' bodies.

According to all of the above, the Resurrection of Christ signifies a radical and universal restoration of all human relationships, not only with God, but also with the entire Creation. For, the obedience and love exercised by the God-Man in becoming "obedient unto death" (Phil. 2:8) opened wide for all time the channels of divine Grace also for those "who sat in darkness and the shadow of death" (Is. 9:2).

It now depends purely upon the type of vessel we use to 'draw the water', namely how much humility we have in light of the long suffering of God.

The greatest perplexity, the most bitter disappointment, and the deepest pain in history, is whether Christians still behave - after 2000 years - as if we understood nothing of this resurrectional transmutation to which God has called us.

For this, may God and the rest of humanity forgive us. Amen.

With fervent prayers for you all in the Risen Christ.

Archbishop STYLIANOS

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# *From the Editor*

EZEKIEL BOZIKIS



## *How To Boil A Frog Alive*



Everyone knows that if you throw a frog into a pot of boiling water, it will simply jump out. The best way to boil a frog is to place it in cold water and then to slowly heat the pot up. Being cold-blooded, the frog's body temperature increases to match that of the surrounding water. Without realizing what is happening, the poor frog is boiled alive.

This, brothers and sisters, is what is happening to us.

Like many Christians in the Western World, we are sitting in a cooking-pot and slowly being stewed; and the worst thing is that we are not even aware of it.

What do I mean, you ask? Simply that most of us do not know what it means to live our lives as Orthodox Christians. What we think is the truth is not necessarily what Christ, His Apostles and the Church Fathers taught. We have absorbed so much from the humanistic and pagan cultures around us that we no longer know truth from falsehood, right from wrong. A simple example of this is that many Christians mistakenly believe that premarital sex, and even homosexuality, is okay. Some have statues of pagan gods (such as Apollo, Aphrodite, or even Buddha) in their homes. Others wear the "mati" (to ward off the evil eye) and read their horoscopes. The early Christians would rather have been thrown to the lions than do these things!

Violence and aggression! How seductive is the need for self-preservation! How many of us have practiced some form of martial arts at some point or other? How

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do we reconcile this with Christ's command to "turn the other cheek"? Again, the early Christians shunned these things. They would not even *watch* a boxing match!

Where do we *not* differ from our faithful forbears? Do women still cover their heads in Church? On the contrary, they barely cover their bodies! It is the honest truth, that if an early Christian were to see a typical modern-day church-going woman (complete with revealing dress and make-up) he would believe her to be a prostitute (mind you, he would probably be shocked with some of the men of today, as well).

My point is not to place blame on anyone (for I, too, have fallen far short of the example of the saints), but merely to point out that our generation has compromised the Faith to such an extent that the early Christians would not recognize us as fellow believers.

I have purposely not mentioned the spiritual elements (such as prayer, fasting, etc.) because most of us are aware of them (regardless of whether or not we practice them). However, few of us are aware of the subtle change to our Christian life-style that the surrounding humanistic/pagan culture imposes.

There are, unfortunately, many Christian denominations that have become morally and theologically bankrupt. They claim to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but they don't believe in His Resurrection and the doctrines of the Apostles, nor do they practice the virtues that Christ taught. It is my heart-felt prayer, brothers and sisters, that we do not go down that broad road which leads to destruction. But, on the contrary, let us fervently hold on to the Faith that has been entrusted to us and may it permeate our whole lives – always "*looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith*" (Heb. 12:2a).

Amen.

*Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.*  
(Romans 12:2)

# **PASCHA: SHARE THE JOY!**

*By Nick Brown B.Th.*

Brothers and Sisters in Christ

Christ is Risen! Pascha 2000 has finally arrived- the celebration of the Feast of Feasts. Friends and families come together to partake of the Paschal meal to commemorate the pinnacle of Christ's ministry of salvation in the world- His Resurrection. The paschal light burns brightly in our homes - that same light that burst through the doors of the iconostasis at midnight in the resurrection service - the symbol of the True Light; Christ, who burst through the doors of Hades to carry those who were dead into paradise - the True Light who burst from the tomb at that first Pascha of the New Covenant nearly 2000 years ago.

## **Spare a thought at Pascha**

Speaking as one who is the only Orthodox Christian in my family, I never find it hard to celebrate with others at this time of the year thanks to God and to the invitations of good Christian friends who open their hearts and homes for me to partake of the Paschal meal together. But spare a thought for others like me in this world, who don't have an Orthodox Christian family and still have nowhere to celebrate. Think of those whose families are divided by members who have left the Body of Christ, adhere to a schismatic or heretical denomination, and thereby choose not to celebrate Christ's Resurrection with the same joyous festivities as the rest of the Orthodox world, or even at the same time as their Orthodox family members. Think of those family members

who are only Orthodox in name, don't really care for religious celebrations, and think of Pascha as merely an ethnic holiday for indulging in food. Think of those in our community who celebrate on their own because they have lost their family in one way or another, or because their family resides in a distant country. It is to these people that we should be opening our hearts and homes to. It is to these people that we should be witnessing to in the celebration of the resurrected Christ. It is to these people that we should be witnessing, particularly at the celebration of Pascha - to the catholicity or universality of Orthodox Christianity.

At the feast of Pascha, from the great Cathedral churches in Russia, to the small village chapels in Greece, to the makeshift hut-like churches in Madagascar - we come together as a worldwide family that shares in the common true faith, to share in the joy of the resurrected Christ.

## **Two Paschal symbols**

The symbols and customs of Christianity provide a rich source of education as to the truths of our faith. Two such symbols that are utilised at the resurrection of Christ, ironically owe their origins to pre-Christian pagan festivities, which were transformed and taken up by Christians worldwide and included in the festivities of Pascha. Secular society will often dwell on the pre-Christian origins of symbols and festivals especially around the periods of Christmas and Pascha, as if we still have a dark past

existing within our faith. Little do they realise that these pagan symbols and feasts, to the Christian, are actually a blessing in disguise, and are ways and means of celebrating the truths of the One true God. It should also be pointed out here that we should refrain from referring to Pascha as 'Easter.' There are no Christian connotations in the name as it derives from the name of an ancient pagan fertility goddess. The proper name that the Christian should apply at this time of year is Pascha, which is the

Greek form of the name for the Jewish Passover. The Jewish Passover was celebrated as the release of the Hebrews from the bonds of slavery in Egypt. By Divine providence, the themes of bondage and slavery have taken on a new spiritual meaning in the light of Christ's resurrection. Now Christ is the one who has released the whole of humanity, past present and future, from the bond and slavery of death and sin, and has allowed for us to enter the promised land; the Heavenly Kingdom.

Now let us take a closer look at two symbols associated with Pascha here in Australia. Firstly, the Easter egg, or more specifically the hard-boiled red eggs that we crack with each other at the Paschal meal. This egg is rich in symbolism and has great meaning in relation to Christ's resurrection. The red colouring stands for the blood that was shed for us on the cross. The outer casing of the shell represents the tomb that Christ was interred into after

being taken down from the cross. When we crack the eggs with each other to reveal the insides, we are in effect recreating the event of Christ rising from the tomb, just as a newborn chick is released from the confines of the eggshell when it receives its new life. This is the other important meaning. New Life. Just as a chick has new life when it escapes from the egg, so too we have new life through Christ's release from the tomb. Prior to Christ's resurrection, humanity was restricted by death, sin, and the Old

Covenant law. Now that Christ is risen, death and hades (the abode of the dead before Christ's resurrection) and even the Old Covenant law no longer have us in their grip. Cracking the eggs with one another not only confesses the truth of Christ's resurrection, the act is also a confession of our belief that death is defeated, that we too have risen with Christ from the confines of death and the law, that we too will physically rise when Christ returns again in

glory. It also shows our release from sin by living the new life in Christ, by living according to His teachings - His example - if we choose to do so.

The second symbol that I will mention here (which is part of the Western tradition) is one that at first seems to be a purely pagan symbol, and something that we are bombarded with at Pascha by the commercial secular world. I'm talking about the symbol of the rabbit or 'easter-bunny.' While the rabbit was used as a fertility



symbol in ancient cultures (due to their well-known breeding capabilities), for the ancient pagan Romans the rabbit also had another meaning - that of sacrifice and salvation. The Romans believed that if a warren of rabbits were threatened by a predator, one solitary rabbit would surface from the burrow to offer itself as a sacrifice to appease the predator in an act that would save the other rabbits within the warren. Hence, when this symbol is viewed in the light of Christianity and Christ's resurrection, we are reminded that death was the predator that preyed on humanity, and that Christ through his own death on the cross was able to not only save us, but He was also able to kill death itself!

### **What is expected of us?**

So what is expected of us now that Lent has passed, and Pascha is here? The answer is to keep Lent and Pascha all throughout the year. What I mean by this is that its possible to practice the repentance, prayerfulness, and fasting of Lent, as well as the joy of the Resurrection of Christ

every week! Try and make your Wednesdays and Fridays (the two days of the week designated as fasting days unless it is a fast-free week) as two 'mini-lents'. Continue for those two days of the week in your fast. Continue in your prayer. Continue in your Scripture reading. Continue in your works of charity for the poor and needy. And then when each Sunday comes, treat it as a 'mini-Pascha.' Every Sunday the Church provides us with hymns and prayers on the theme of the Resurrection of Christ to put us in a joyous mood for the Sabbath. You can celebrate the Risen Christ every Sunday of the year. Get together with family, friends, acquaintances, strangers, anyone, and rejoice in the risen Christ. Share a meal together. Make Sunday a special day. Why relegate festive joy in Christ's Resurrection to only one day of the year? To all I wish a blessed paschal season, and through the saving grace of the risen Christ may we all proceed closer to our goal: to abide eternally with the author of life. Amen.

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## **Daily Vitamins** *Meditate on these:*



Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. (Hebrews 11:1)

*May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice. (Psalm 141:2)*

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

# FAITH – The Struggle of our Century

By Father Dimitri Tsakas

Speech given at the 7th State Youth Conference Adelaide, Sept. 1999.

*Your Eminence, Your Grace, Reverend Fathers, Sisters and Brothers in Christ. I stand before you a humbled man and Priest. We have come here under the tender love of God and within the embrace of our Mother the Church, to reflect upon a topic of such magnitude that it is frightening. It frightens me to speak about my weaknesses, to stand before you as a young Priest who struggles daily with the very reflection we are about to contemplate. This is a talk to be delivered by spiritual and holy persons and yet here I find myself again at the mercy of our Father in the Heavens asked to speak, when for a person such as myself it is better to keep silent on these things. It is good to remember the words of St. James "let everyone be quick to listen and slow to speak." (James 1:19) He also warns me personally today with his words "let not many of you desire to be teachers...for you know that those who teach will be judged with greater strictness." (James 3:1) I thought it safer to let other more courageous people speak to you through this paper, people who triumphed in their faith and received its Divine Power with open arms and a pure heart. The people who will speak are insignificant in the world's eyes. They come from our own century and their story spans it from beginning to end. They will teach you as I do nothing but convey their story and extract what is useful for us. I will begin with their story of faith and end with their inspiration for our own personal journey of faith.*

The roar of revolution sweeping her land once terrified a young girl. As is often the case, intellectuals had theorised about ideological change, but the reality of their theory turned out to be a brutal regime. Fear and anxiety overwhelmed the little girl's grandmother, her babushka as she called her. In the still of night she took her young granddaughter through backstreets and to the community's church, which stood on the outskirts of town. There she gave youthful hands sacred objects to carry icons of Christ, Panagia, and the Saints. The young girl was confused but safe in her grandmother's care. With precious cargo in their hands they walked briskly back to their farmhouse which was only a ten-minute walk beyond the boundaries of suburbia. They carried the spiritual heritage of their ancestors. The little girl was excited by the sense of spontaneous adventure in her babushka's actions, even though terror filled the air. Babushka kissed the icons one by one and tenderly wrapped them in cloths. The two generations represented by each of them, walked deep into the family's cellar basement underground where babushka carefully hid the icons before the solitary witness of their prototypes and a young child "to whom belongs the Kingdom of God".



Babushka related the stories of Daniel and the Three Holy Children to her granddaughter as she had heard them through preaching and hymnology. She recounted their faithfulness and courage, and the tenacity of Israel in the face of Babylonian tyranny. She told the young child to keep these things in her heart and to always remember where the icons were hidden. The child didn't understand these events but with all her youthful innocence she soaked up what was to her another tender moment of love and intimacy with her grandmother. Babushka was upset, her breath was heavy and desperate, but the young girl just couldn't understand why. Besides, this was all very exciting for a 10-year-old girl living in 1917 Russia.

The next day the new authorities in the town closed that church. The priest disappeared. It was only in later years that our little girl was told that he was taken from the town and killed by firing squad. At school she was beaten for mentioning God and forcefully taught that Christianity is myth and that faith was a figment of the human imagination, created by humanity to make itself feel safe in the face of the unknown. The great teachers, Marx and Lenin had revealed that life begins and ends here and that "heaven" could only be created by the people, here in the form of the State. All this was uneasy on her ears, and anyway, too hard for her to understand. As far as she was concerned God was definitely there because she spoke with Him daily and felt His presence with her constantly. She kept this secret because the beatings really hurt.

Our little girl was only 14 when Babushka died. Although many prayers were spoken secretly, her burial was devoid of familiar childhood smells of incense or the comfort of hymns. There was no priest, no church building and no public prayer. All these things were illegal in her town. Darkness had descended upon the town's life and fear seemed to permeate the people. The new regime of communism had brought more individual fear and paranoia than any sense of equality and community. She grew up in this environment, married, had children and survived as best she could. Babushka's story about Daniel and the Three Holy Children was never eliminated from her heart. It remained a closely guarded secret. As secret in fact, as the Liturgy she regularly attended at various houses in the town lead by a Priest who was ordained secretly.

Much blood was spilled and many martyrs sanctified the land before permission came from the authorities that the old church could again be used for communal worship. Since the beginning of the dark days, the authorities had blown off its roof, built a ramp, and used it as a place for the town garbage dump. When it filled after some decades, the garbage was left there and a new site dedicated for the same purpose close by. The Christians, who for over 70 years lived their faith and worship secretly, now came to the church and found decades of garbage. With no money or machinery at their disposal, they had a mountain to move. Their Priest said this is the power of faith, "to move mountains"! They formed a human line from the church to the new garbage dump. Faith empowered them to remove decades of garbage, symbolic of humanity's rebellion, with their bare hands from the church to the dump. It took months of great effort and prayer. All the while, the little Christian community was being shaped by the power of faith. Then there was no roof, and no money to buy the materials in order to build one. It was now the 1990s. At a meeting held to discuss the problem, a young man walked toward the priest and placed his wedding ring on

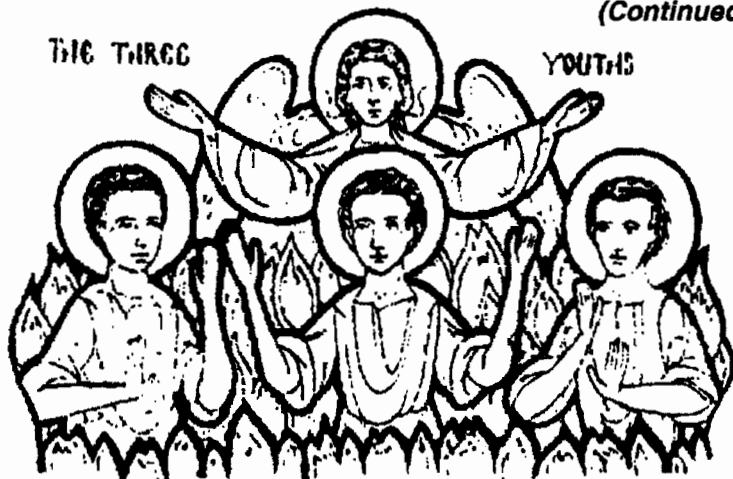
the table in front of him. The priest took off his watch and placed it next to the wedding ring. One after the other, people of poverty walked up to the table placing wedding rings, chains, watches and any valuables they possessed on the table. These were melted down and sold and the roof was built. Not discussion, but the action of one young man's faith made the event possible. The power of faith!

The community finally gathered in their church for the Eucharist. As is the Russian custom, the Hours were being read before the Divine Liturgy. The church was full of faith but physically bare. Our little girl stood during the worship, now an old bent over woman of 85. She heard the reader say the word "Israel". It resounded in her heart as a calling from God to fulfil her life's calling. A flood of memories came to her as she remembered her babushka. "Wait" she cried out. Silence fell upon the worship and everyone looked at her. "The Icons" she yelled, "the icons". "I know where the icons are"! She took her own granddaughter and went to the farmhouse cellar. Tearfully she found the icons and tenderly unwrapped them. The new generation of babushka and granddaughter brought them to the priest and they were placed back in their home after seventy years of exile! That day she understood that all those years ago, her babushka was talking about faith and not succumbing to the idols of this world!

It is the human destiny to accept this gift from God. A Priest once wrote... *Civilisations have followed one after another, the external forms of human life have changed, the face of the earth has changed, but this spiritual thirst for faith remains ever indestructible, ever unquenchable, It is a gift, given to human beings as the sign and essence of their very humanity.*

Although nothing is more innate in the human psyche than faith and communion with God, nothing was more evident to our little girl than the ironic and contradictory fact, that almost everything in the modern world says, give up your faith. Renounce it and you will find happiness in the things of this world. Twentieth century atheism simply tapped into this tension. We face this same temptation in our society. The tyrants of our story sought the solution not in a struggle to overcome the world through faith in Christ, but in an attempt to overthrow God with faith in this world. The results are self-evident.

**(Continued on page 21)**



# Communicating the Faith:

## Reflections on Orthodox Evangelism

By Fr Anastasios Bozikis

“So then faith come by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”.  
(Rom. 10:17)

“Acquire inner peace and thousands around you will be saved”. (St. Seraphim of Sarov)

Christianity is founded on the experience of a message – the ‘good news’ (gospel/evangelion) of salvation through the Incarnation, Death and Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ. This salvation is appropriated by each believer through faith. In the words of St. Paul, “...If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Rom. 10:9) But in order to believe this message needs to be communicated. The need to find the most appropriate method of ‘spreading the Gospel’ has concerned the Church from the very beginning. Bridging the cultural, ethnic and generational divides in order to communicate the saving message has been at the center of all missionary and evangelistic activity of the Church. In fact within Orthodox understanding the ‘process’ of communicating the Gospel becomes just as important as the content that is being communicated in preserving the authenticity and salvific power of the message. Rather the content informs the process and vice versa. This is the living Tradition of our Church. While the process has remained essentially the same it has been adapted to respond to the particular needs of each time and place. Today we

are interested in examining the essential principles which undergird the communication of the Gospel in light of the Incarnation and seeing how these principles may be applied to our context as young Greek Orthodox Christians living in Australia at the close of the Twentieth century. In doing so we need to challenge ourselves to see what part we play in the reception and communication of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Recently I had an encounter with a young woman from the cult of the Jehovah’s Witnesses. She came to my office ostensibly to ask some questions about the Orthodox faith with an Orthodox friend of hers. She then promptly proceeded to lead me through the New World mistranslation of the Bible trying to prove to me that the Kingdom of God was a future situation in which Christ would establish His rule over the earth and we would all live in Paradise. Eventually I asked her a question – ‘Have you experienced the kingdom of God?’ She did not know what I was talking about. How irrelevant is a gospel which has nothing to say about the existential concerns of humanity which is only concerned with speculation about the future state – even the Marxists can do better than that.

The reason I emphasize this is because the communication of the Gospel cannot be restricted to the proclamation and reception of any number of statements or theses. It goes far deeper than this. In order to understand this better let us firstly examine

the way in which our Lord communicated the Gospel to us.

### The Incarnation

'God became man in order that man might become god', states St Athanasios. This statement expresses fundamental truths concerning the nature of the Gospel. God did not limit Himself to sending a message to us either directly from heaven or through the medium of a prophet as the Moslems believe. Neither did He create a semi-divine lesser being to communicate to us in His place as the Gnostics or Jehovah Witnesses claim. The Word of God, the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity, God Himself and our Creator, became a human being and so united Himself to us. This is how St Paul describes it:

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross". (Phil 2:5-8)

Humility and obedience even to the point of death – these are the hallmarks of Christ's Incarnation. And in them lie the principles of Orthodox evangelism. Our Lord chose to become one of us, to live like one of us – to suffer, to feel, to experience everything

that we do and yet without sin – and ultimately to die like one of us. There is no element of human existence which He did not take to Himself and so is able to transform it all into the likeness of God. The Fathers, in defending the necessity of God becoming fully man for our salvation say that anything which Christ did not assume in Himself would not be able to be saved.

Our Lord defined the missionary work of His disciples as a direct continuation of His work. "As you did send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world" (Jn 17:18). He said in His High-priestly

prayer and after the Resurrection, He repeated the same truth to His disciples saying: "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you" (Jn 20:21). Within the framework of this 'as...even so' we must search for not only the contents, but also the means and method of Orthodox evangelism. In the Gospel of St John the fellowship and unity between Father and Son is emphasized. Every word and work of our Lord is dependent upon

and connected with His Father. "I do nothing on my own authority, but speak thus as the Father taught me. And He who sent me, is with me; He has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to Him" (Jn 8:28-29). His message is nothing more than what He 'had heard' and 'had seen' (Jn 8:26, 38). His will is the same as the will of the Father. "I seek not my own

#### CALL OF THE FIRST DISCIPLES:



will but the will of Him who sent me (Jn 5:30). His works are the works of the Father (Jn 5:36). The Apostles participated in this relationship of the Father and the Son: "He who receives any one whom I send receives me and he who receives me receives Him who sent me" (Jn 13:20).

Our Lord did not merely preach salvation to us, He did not give us an act of principles to implement nor even an example to follow but participated in our life and calls us to participate in His. Only in Him who is the Source of Life will we be able to find abundant life – eternal life. So it is no wonder that when we present a gospel of moral rules, philosophical statements or ideological positions even though they may be based on the Bible or the Fathers, people reject them as having little relevance to their life situation. They reject them for two reasons. Firstly because we, as the communicators of the Gospel, have failed to understand that the Kingdom of God is amongst us as a living reality. Secondly, even if we have understood this truth we fail to convince because we have not made this real in our own lives. Perhaps the Lord's rebuke to the Pharisees should ring loudly in our ears:

"Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow who are entering to go in." (Matt. 23:13)

### **Living the Faith**

According to the Fathers of the Church the process of salvation is called theosis (deification). This is a theological term through which Orthodox Theology describes the progress of the human person towards God. To be saved, therefore, means to become like God. This task was

initially given to Adam at the time of the Creation but through disobedience he separated himself from God and made it impossible for humans to complete this calling without divine intervention. It became necessary for the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity to become human, which at the same time remaining fully God, in order to deify human nature. This does not mean that human beings are able to become God in His essence. But it does mean that they can become 'gods' by grace, even as they remain creatures of a human nature.

We are called then to imitate Christ but on our own strength, this task is impossible. I think each one of us can identify with St Paul's acknowledgment of the weakness of human nature when he confesses, "I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do (Rom. 7:19). Theosis becomes possible only because Jesus Christ has freed us from the consequences of sin and restored within His own Person the distorted image of God in human beings. This opens the way for us to cooperate with God ascetically and mystically toward deification. "We are God's fellow workers (synergoi)," writes St Paul (1 Cor. 3:9).

Living the faith has to do with the restoration of the image of God in humanity. In the biblical account of the Creation God says, "Let us make man in our image after our likeness" (Gen 1:26). Orthodox Theology has traditionally approached this statement by giving two complementary, yet distinct meanings, to the terms 'image' and 'likeness'. St John of Damascus summarized the Orthodox interpretation of the text in this way:

"For the phrase 'after His image' clearly refers to the side of [human] nature which

consists of mind and free will, whereas 'after His likeness' means likeness in virtue so far as that is possible."

'Image' connotes that each individual human being is an integral personality having reason, free will and moral responsibility. 'Likeness', on the other hand, connotes vocation, exercise, virtue and growth. In other words the 'image' is what we are – made in the image of God. The 'likeness' is our potential – we can become like God. The process is theosis which cannot be achieved in a moment of conversion. Rather it is accomplished through a lifetime of constant striving and maturing.

For Orthodox Christians then the nature of evangelism or the communication of the Gospel cannot be reduced to the mere proclamation and creative acceptance of a statement – even a Biblical statement. Salvation itself is much more than faith in a past event or person. It is a way of life or rather life itself. And so the Church Herself does not only bear witness to Christ (according to Billy Graham) but communicates or communes Christ in the world. She calls all people to her in order to participate in the divine life:

"Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has

granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature."

(2Peter 1:2-4)

## The Stages in the Spiritual Life

The term 'Orthodoxy' consists of two words: 'orthos' meaning true or right and 'doxa' which means belief or teaching and by extension, glorification. These are connected with each other very closely. Correct teaching about God constitutes right and true glorification of God. If God was an abstract force then prayer to God would also be abstract. But if God is a person then prayer and worship take on a very personal character. God has revealed the true faith and the true teaching. Thus we can say that the teaching about God and all matters associated with man's salvation are the revelation of God and not man's discovery.

Yet God has revealed this truth to people who have been prepared for this. Judas, the Brother of God, express this point well by saying: "I appeal to you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints" (Jude 3). In this quotation it is evident that God reveals Himself to the Saints – to those people who have reached a certain level of spiritual growth which enables them to be receptive to this Revelation. The Holy Apostles were



(Continued on page 18)

swers our prayers

## of Saint Paul



Although Paul did many miracles, he was always sick .

He prayed to God to heal him. Nothing happened. Paul prayed again; and again, nothing happened.

Paul prayed a third time, and this time God spoke to him.

God told Paul, "The pain has to stay, but I will help you bear it."

God let him have some pain so that Paul would never become proud and forget God.

This way Paul would always remember God and be close to Him.

Paul stayed faithful to God for the rest of his life.

Remember, God *always* answers prayer: sometimes He says 'yes', sometimes He says 'wait' and sometimes He says 'no'.

# God hears our prayers The Story of Hannah



Hannah was a woman who was very sad because she didn't have any children.

She cried and always prayed to the Lord. "Please Lord, God of heaven and earth, see how unhappy I am - have mercy on me. Please give me a son and I promise he will serve You all the days of his life."



When Samuel was three years old, Hannah took him to the temple and gave him to Eli the priest.

"I promised that if the Lord would give me a son, I would serve God all my life. So I have brought him here to be trained in God's house," Hannah said.

"I prayed for this child, and the Lord has given me what I asked," Hannah said to Eli.

"God bless you, Hannah! Now the boy will live with me, and I will teach him to be a priest to the Lord," said Eli.

# prayers f Hannah



When the time came, God answered Hannah's prayers.

Hannah and her husband Elkanah were so happy when their son Samuel was born.

They thanked God for answering their prayers.

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Samuel stayed with Eli and eagerly learned what God expects of those who serve Him.

Each year when Hannah and Elkanah came to worship at the church, Hannah would bring Samuel a new coat which she made for him.

Samuel grew up obeying God and God loved him.

God always an

## The story

When Paul was a young man he didn't like Christians. He was part of a gang that killed St. Stephen and put other people in jail just because they were Christians. Everybody was afraid of him.

The Christians asked God to save them from this terrible man. God answered their prayers.

Jesus appeared to Paul one day and spoke to him. After that Paul was a changed man. He now knew that Jesus was real, and he was very sorry for all the bad things he had done.

Now Paul loved and followed Jesus. He became the greatest Christian who ever lived. He healed the sick people, raised people from the dead.



Archbishop Stylianos became Vice-President and later President of the Patriarchal Institute of Patristic Studies within the monastery, of which he was one of the founding members. He was declared Professor of Theology at Athens University in 1965, lecturing in Systematic Theology at the University of Thessaloniki (1969-1975). In 1970 he was unanimously elected by the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate as Titular Metropolitan of Militoupolis, whilst remaining in the Holy Monastery of Vlatodon, serving as the Exarch (Representative) of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in matters concerning Northern Greece and the Holy Mountain. In 1975 he was unanimously elected Archbishop of Australia.

He often takes part in major Academic conferences. He has repeatedly represented the Ecumenical Patriarch in World Council of Churches General Assemblies. From the beginning of the Theological Dialogue between Orthodox and Roman Catholics, he was head of the Patriarchal Delegation and unanimously elected as the Orthodox Co-Chairman. Before the dialogue he served as member of the Patriarchal Delegation in the International Dialogue with the Anglicans, as well as Co-Chairman. He has published widely in Dogmatic and Systematic Theology and, up to now, 16 collections of poetry.

Since 1975, Archbishop Stylianos has taught Orthodox Theology and Spirituality at Sydney University. From 1986 he was Dean of the Theological college of Saint Andrew, established during his time, in which he lectures in the Systematic Theology.

Apart from other honorary distinctions, he has been honoured with the International Award Gottfried von Herder (1973), as well as the Award for Poetry from the Academy of Athens (1980) and an Honorary Doctorate from the Lublin University, Poland (1985).

<< ΠΟΛΛΑ ΤΑ ΕΤΗ, ΔΕΣΠΟΤΑ >>



[Biographical information obtained from *The Truth*, Vol. 7, No. 9, 1-15 May, 2000]

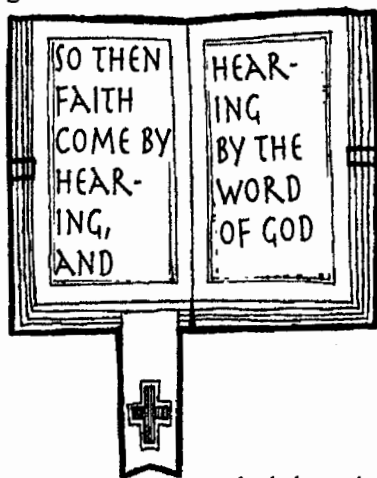
healed first and then received the revelation. They handed down this Revelation to their spiritual children not only by teaching them, but primarily by mystically effecting their spiritual rebirth. We accept the dogmas and the definitions; in other words we accept this revealed faith and remain within the Church in order to be cured. For, on the one hand, this faith is Revelation to those purified and cured and, on the other, it is the right path to attain the cure for their souls for those who have chosen to follow the 'Way'.

According to the Holy Fathers there are two kinds of faith. The first is rational faith that comes from hearing – it is an introductory faith. The second is faith based on the vision of God (theosis) it is the faith of the perfect and that which save humanity. There is no conflict between these two kinds of faith. The former is introductory and the latter is the result of the former. Thus, we accept the faith of the Holy Fathers of the Church in order to cleanse our hearts from the passions and to successfully go through the first stage of *purification*. The passions are the 'negative thought charged with emotion' which, if not transformed, will develop into vices and lead us to do those things which are contrary to God's will.

When purification is achieved we then reach the stage of the illumination (or enlightenment) of the *nous* (the soul or the heart that is the center of our being) which is the second faith that faith is based

on a real vision or experience of God. When Adam was created he was at the point of illumination but after his disobedience he became subject to the various passions. So, now we need the correct faith in order to reach the faith based on *theoria*, that is the illumination of the *nous*, and from there to the vision of God. The first faith opens up the way to the cure and the second faith is the fruit and result of our cure.

In his Epistle, St James speaks of the first faith which needs to purify us. He says, "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James 2:26). But the theoretical acceptance of faith through hearing and the works which it demands are necessary for us so as to be purified and healed. The Apostle Paul speaks of *perfect* faith, faith based on the vision of God, where he says: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Rom. 3:28). Many Christians think that St James contradicts the Apostle Paul. Interpreting the Epistle to the Romans, Protestants have



reached the point of speaking only about faith without works. But they do not realize that St Paul is referring to the faith based on the vision of God which is beyond the works of the law. The first faith and works are necessary for us to pass the stage of purification of the heart correctly and effectively. When this is accomplished we reach the illumination of the *nous*, whose characteristic is ceaseless prayer. This is faith from *theoria* which is a surpassing and not an abolition of the works of the Law.

## Communicating the Faith

Keeping in mind then the nature of the Gospel which the Orthodox Church proclaims and the manner in which this was given to us by our Lord Himself the issue of how this Gospel is to be communicated remains. We have not as a Church sought to adopt the strong arm tactics which both the Catholics and Protestants have at times consciously used. The peculiar historical circumstances of the Orthodox Church may partly account for this. The fact that the Church found Herself initially hemmed in by Catholicism to the west and Islam to the east and later found Herself under Ottoman and communist rule left little scope for expansionist missionary activity. Nevertheless from the time of St Cyril and Methodios and their conversion of the Slavs enough examples of Orthodox missionary work can be studied to realize that our understanding of mission and evangelism is different precisely because our understanding of the Gospel is different. From the Russian missions in Alaska and the far-east to the modern Greek missions in Africa and Asia as well as in the Churches of the Orthodox diaspora in western Europe, the Americas and Australia, the principles of Orthodox evangelism and mission have remained basically the same. But the task of communicating the Gospel is not confined to 'professional' missionaries or just the clergy. Each Orthodox Christian has a vital part to play within the ambit of their responsibilities. Our concern at this point is not so much a division of responsibilities as an appreciation of the fundamental characteristics which each Christian who is true to the Gospel should seek to possess.

## Characteristics of the Orthodox 'missionary'

The Orthodox Christian is called to continue the earthly ministry of Christ and so our life should emulate that of our Lord. It must be characterized by a *kenosis* or self emptying and *diakonia* or service (Mark 10:45). We must follow in His footsteps in serving our brothers and sisters, whether Orthodox or not, not with a view to proselytism but rather to manifest the living Christ to them. In living and working in the world we are to manifest the glory of God and the mystery of the Incarnation.

In order to be at all times a living witness of the presence of our Lord, the Christian must be in continuous personal relationship with Him. He must not only think or talk about Him but 'live in Christ' (Gal. 2:20). This means a deep relationship with Christ or the whole person, not merely the intellect. It is the transformed life of the entire being in Christ that is the true characteristic of the Christian. Two things will help this living relationship. Firstly the sanctification of the Christian in the truth of the Gospel. 'Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth' (Jn 17:7). Secondly the conscious participation in the sacraments, especially the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father has sent me and I live by the Father so he who eats me shall live by me (Jn 6:56-57). It is clear that there is a direct relationship between 'eating' and 'drinking' and 'sending' that is between participation in the sacramental life of the Church and evangelistic work.

## Conclusion

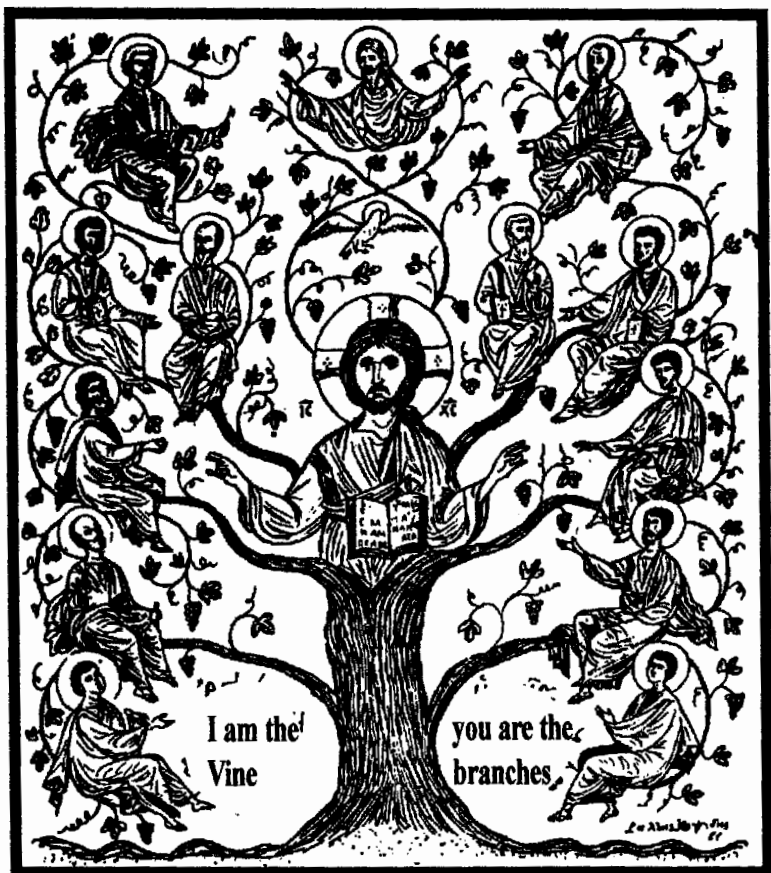
According to the affirmation of the Lord, "As the father has sent me, so I also send you" (Jn 20:21). The mission of the Church is the continuation of His earthly ministry and participation in the living presence of our Lord in the world. It is a participation in the life of our Lord "who gave us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:8).

Since the Christian is an 'emissary', an 'apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God' (Eph. 1:1), he will be talking in vain about his faith if he does not try to be in constant 'communion' with Christ. What matters is not what he himself is going to say and do, but what the Lord will say and do through him.

So it is our duty to make the best use of all the opportunities and available facilities of the modern world for the extension of the Kingdom of God, but we should do this without falling into the temptation of superficial activism.

Our supreme concern must be *not what we should do* but *how we should be a living witness* to the presence of the Lord in the world.

*(Presented by Rev Anastasios Bozikis at the 7<sup>th</sup> State Youth Conference – Melbourne 1999; and as quoted in "The Orthodox Messenger", Vol. 10, No. 6-9, July-Oct., 1999, pp. 4-8)*



Faith and spiritual thirst are innate, we cannot escape them. We must believe in something greater than ourselves. When we choose the world, our soul is uneasy. When we choose the Kingdom of God, our body tries to rebel. This is the tension we must overcome through faith in Christ. The spiritual thirst in every person is so strong that it must be filled, it will never remain void. If we are not filled by the Living God, then idols will fill us. And as we know, an idol is anything that is worshipped instead of God. Idolatry remains the quintessential tension in Christian faith. Our sins are the "gods" we choose over the indwelling of the Living God. Indeed, whatever we choose to make more important than God, is an idol. Consequently, in our baptism, the church prays "expel from him the spirit of idolatry." This was the constant tension between God and Israel. This is our tension today.

Our only chance of escape from the "spirit of idolatry" is an intimately personal faith in Jesus Christ always within the communal context of the Church and her Life. It is when we walk daily with Christ as children of the Church, that we can clearly see the idols in our way. Dogmatism and institutional understandings of faith cannot do this for us. Indeed, for many people, an institutional perception of religion keeps them from God. For many Orthodox, the Church has become an idol. For many Protestants, the Bible has become an idol. Babushka warned the little girl of our story to be wary of idols as Daniel and the Three Children were. This sustained her as she realised that communism was imitating Nebuchadnezzar by setting itself up as a "false god".

At the turn of the century, Russia was in turmoil. Much of the aristocracy was decadent and void of compassion. Great parts of the population were desperate and simply put, hungry. The great Elders had warned of impending oppression in the absence of repentance. There was need for change in the face of social injustice, and the intelligentsia of the time largely rejected existing social structures. Many of them were drawn to perceptions of the Church as an institution of the existing and oppressive social order. Marx had declared religion "the opium of the people" making them numb to their current earthly state. In the absence of Christian faith, the philosophy of materialism in the guise of Marxism filled a void. The State became a "god" and those who refused to worship it were eliminated.

Today, materialism is still one of our greatest temptations, this time attempting to fill the void in subtle ways more attune with



human tolerance. In many ways we are seen not as persons but as consumers, potential dollar signs. Overtly, freedom is not challenged and indeed, individual rights are exalted to sometimes-harmful degrees. Our society repeatedly calls us to reject faith and seek fulfilment through the acquisition of material wealth, forgetting of course that wise and age old simple Greek question <<Θα τα πάρεις μαζέι σου;>>.

Consumerism has now become the "opium of the people". It is more dangerous than

the communism our little girl was subjected to because churches are not being closed, we don't need to hide the icons, and no battle lines are subsequently drawn. This new "idol" sets up its statue in our society, ever tempting us to worship it and forget Christ's Words...*Do not store up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal. (Matt 6:19)*

From our story we see that disaster ensues when attempts are made to fulfil the human destiny upon this earth. The first and most fundamental decision about authentic faith begins here. Our ultimate destiny as persons created in the image of God and called to attain His likeness is not fulfilled here. It begins in this life but is not realised here fully. We are "to lead the life that the Lord has assigned, to which God has called us" (I Cor 7:17), but "all of us must appear before the judgement seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil." (II Cor 4:10) The Apostle Peter says to us that God "has given us everything needed for life and godliness," that through His Grace we may escape from the corruption which is in this world and "become partakers of the divine nature." (II Pet 1:3-4) And so, this is our destiny, the destiny of authentic faith. The babushka in our story knew this in her own simple way; she understood what the intellectuals were unable to grasp.

The little girl in our story spent a lifetime witnessing the darkness of idolatry. Despite 70 years of propaganda she lived the reality that faith which is authentic could not be crushed. She came to understand that liberation lay in God and not in the materialistic state. Although her people "walked through the valley of the shadow of death" (Ps 22:4) she understood that only "those who do not lift up their souls to what is false," could fulfil the human destiny of faith which is "to seek the face of the God of Jacob." (Ps 23: 3-6)

Eventually, the reality of humanity's inner need for spirituality and freedom brought the regime to collapse, not so much through revolution this time as through simple necessity. So with us, when we realise that our destiny is to partake in the divine nature, we can begin to grow. Something else also happens. At this point, a revelation occurs within us. Faith brings us to the reality of our sin. The people of our story were confronted with the reality of the garbage they had to remove. This was a mountain that only authentic faith could overcome. Decades of darkness brought with it much rubbish that had to be cleared. When we come to a faith in God there is much garbage that needs to be dealt with and cleared. The starting point for this is repentance (μετάνοια), a radical redirection of our vision or worldview. It took the community in that little town much effort and struggle to remove the sins of communist Russia.

Through the Church, God gives us the resources we need to begin this struggle. He gives us confession for repentance and guidance. He gives us prayer as fuel for our journey. He gives us the Eucharist as food for our souls. He gives us fasting as a reminder that this world and its things are transitory. When we can face the mountain of garbage and confront it with repentance then the Word of God given to Jeremiah the prophet will comfort us "I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more." (Jer31:34) This point in our walk is a difficult and confronting one. It is also a recurring one because the reality of sin is an abiding reality in our lives. The process of cleansing continues to our last breath through the ascetic struggle. The people of our story are now agonising over other sins in their nation.

Our Russian community had to learn another lesson in faith, a lesson that we have to learn too. The roof that had to be built over their Church could metaphorically be seen as the architectural glory of the structure. A young man initiated the solution, by freely

giving perhaps what was the dearest thing he owned, his wedding ring. The community followed by giving what was valuable to them. They put themselves second and their goal first. Faith involved total sacrifice. If our personal faith is to be full, if our repentance is to be complete, then we have to learn the lesson of sacrifice. For God to enter our life we must realise our destiny lies beyond the temporal, we must drive out the idols and clean out the garbage, but also commit ourselves to a journey of self-emptying. This is by far the most difficult aspect of authentic faith. It means rejecting what St. Maximus calls *Φιλαυτία*, self-love. It is realising the words of the Apostle... *It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me*. When we surrender our will to God, then we find freedom and all things fall into place.

We return now to the most dramatic aspect of our story. The little girl is now a babushka in her own right and has a granddaughter of her own standing with her as she had with her own babushka as a little girl during worship. Everything almost seemed complete and the Liturgy was about to begin, when she cries out "wait, the icons". This is highly symbolic and very important. The icon is an image. The first iconographer is God who makes us in His image. After years of exile, after much effort and faith within that community, after self-emptying sacrifice, the images are restored. This was a personal "Triumph of Orthodoxy" for that community. The state not only destroyed Church images. It committed a greater crime. It attempted to exile the image of God in humanity. The Eucharistic gathering of the community in our story acknowledged the image of God within humanity. There in their restored Church they were once again publicly eucharistic beings. When we are at this point in our faith, when we allow God to cleanse us, when we have confronted our own sin and responded in faith, then the image of God begins to shine forth, the "ancient beauty" is restored in each of us. Our story shows a community of faith coming "out of darkness into light" in the same way that faith can bring each of us into light.

The final aspect of our story reveals one final moving dynamic. Through the years of oppression, the people of faith stayed together and supported each other. In that church building, individuals became persons in communion not only with God, but also with each other. In fact there is no communion with God that is separate from communion with other persons. Authentic faith fulfils our inner natural movement toward the other. The mystics would say, "salvation is in your brother" because their experience of faith organically led them to their brother. They understood that they are indeed their brother's keeper. (Gen 4:9)

The potential for faith is placed in our inner being as the ever-existing calling for us to discover the Divine purpose for human existence. It reveals reality for us and guides us to true wisdom and meaning in life. All this is a gift from God to every human being. Our acceptance is the key that opens the divine potential that faith can offer, not only to move mountains, but to make us the people of God who drink from the water of life (Rev 22:17), logical people whose imitation is the Logos, people of compassion in the face of the modern human tragedy, people who bring light in the midst of darkness. Surely this is even greater a miracle than the moving of mountains. The people in our story speak to us of this potential in Christ.

THE  
CHURCH OF  
CHRIST



# PEARLS OF THE INNER MYSTERIES

When we hear the word of God and make no effort to respond to what we have heard, our inactivity can rob us of the hope and gift of understanding. Many of us can assume a position of spiritual complacency whilst continuing to seek and surround ourselves with holy things in holy places.

We may even become so familiar and accustomed to the routine of prayer, the routine of fasting, the routine of attending Church and the routine of the Church calendar that it is done out of habit rather than through faith. In such circumstances our soul is not an active participant of what is holy. Unless these precious moments of our lives are activated by faith, they become lifeless activities holding no value for our salvation.

How else other than by faith can we seek to be enlightened and to declare what we know to be the truth? How else other than by faith can we contemplate our Lord's incarnation? How can we explain His Resurrection? His victory of life over death on the Holy Cross. How might we explain to the world His Ascension into Heaven and His being seated at the right hand of the Father? How would we attempt any explanation of the Holy Trinity, the meaning of Pentecost, the Resurrection of the dead, the Final Judgement day and eternal life. How might we explain the Church as the Ark of our Salvation, the very Body of Christ?

Clearly we cannot communicate these holy precious things by human logic and rational thought. These things are revealed to us only by faith through grace and the Holy Spirit. We cannot communicate these things without faith and they cannot be received

without faith. There are therefore many to whom the word of God will never find root because their ground (the state of their soul) is hard and parched.

And it is not only the deep and theological themes of our belief that we struggle with if we lack faith. No. Without our active cooperation with God through faith, even the seemingly small and simple events and holy traditions of our Church that we have witnessed from the early days of our childhood will appear fragmented, incomplete, contradictory, irrelevant and

even perhaps confusing, though the truth is always whole and complete. The imperfection that we perceive is merely a reflection of our own disjointed spiritual state.

The truth is that we all possess very little knowledge, if any at all. Because the knowledge that we say we possess is not ours but has been granted to us as the gift of life, allowing us to experience the splendour of God's glorious creation. So tiny and incomplete is this experience of ours that we have no hope of

finding a meaningful direction in life if we believe we can establish an independent understanding of our own. This is why the canons of the Church and her sacraments are so vitally important in the practice of the faith, outside of which nothing but heresy exists and spiritual peril for the unsuspecting and indifferent alike.

But it is not so much the limitation of our knowledge that restricts us, so much as our



separation from God, which thwarts us. We do not, as so many people believe these days, have to carry lorry loads of knowledge to be saved. Christ reminds us that only a small and tiny mustard seed of faith is all that is needed to fundamentally change us and to bring us to the knowledge of the truth.

This knowledge however, can only be activated in us by our love for God and each other; revealed to us by the practice of faith through our trials and tribulations and "the fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom." (Proverbs 9:10)

There is therefore in a manner of speaking a certain seal with God's word, which cannot be broken by those who do not love Him and who do not live by faith. The meaning of God's word is hidden from those who oppose Him or are indifferent to Him. Jesus warned His disciples accordingly:

"Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces." (Matt. 7:6)

Here Jesus refers to 'pearls' as His precious teachings and "the inner mysteries of the Christian faith, particularly the Eucharist" (Orthodox Study Bible footnotes on Matthew 7:6). Jesus warns the disciples not to waste their time with the godless (dogs) and immoral (swine) people that are incapable of receiving His message because of their indifference and opposition to His word.

In the Old Testament we hear the same message:

"He who corrects a scoffer gets himself abuse, and he who reproves a wicked man incurs injury. Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will still be wiser; teach a righteous man and he will increase in learning. The fear of the Lord is the

beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight." (Proverbs 9:7-10)

St. Maximos the Confessor (4th Century, Philok. Vol.II pp. 109) refers to the instructions of St Paul (Eph. 3:17) who tells us that Christ dwells in our hearts through faith, and all the treasures and wisdom and spiritual knowledge are hidden in Him. It follows then says St. Maximos, "that all the treasures of wisdom and spiritual knowledge are hidden in our hearts. They are revealed to the heart in proportion to our purification by means of the commandments.

"Who enlightened you with faith in the holy, coessential and adorable Trinity?" asks St. Maximos the Confessor (pp. 110) "Or who made known to you the incarnate dispensation of one of the Holy Trinity? Who taught you about the inner essences of incorporeal beings, or about the origin and consummation of the visible world, or about the resurrection from the dead and eternal life, or about the glory of the kingdom of heaven and the dreadful judgement? Was it not the grace of Christ dwelling in you, which is the pledge of the Holy Spirit? What is greater than this grace? What is more noble than this wisdom and knowledge? What is more lofty than these promises?

But if we are lazy and negligent, and if we do not cleanse ourselves from the passions which defile us, blinding our intellect and so preventing us from seeing the inner nature of these realities more clearly than the sun, let us blame ourselves and not deny the indwelling of grace." (pp. 110)

*Deacon Emmanuel Stamatiou*

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# WWYD?



If Jesus came to your house to spend a day or two, if He came unexpected, I wonder what you would do?

I know you'd give your nicest room to such an honoured guest, and all the food you'd serve Him would be the very best.

And would you keep assuring Him you're glad to have Him there, that serving Him in your home, is joy beyond compare.

But when you saw Him coming, would you meet Him at the door, with arms outstretched in welcome to your heavenly visitor?

Or would you have to change your clothes before you let Him in, or hide some magazines and put the Bible where they had been.



Would you turn off the radio and hope He hadn't heard, and wish you hadn't uttered that last, LOUD, hasty word?

Would you hide your worldly music and put some hymn books out; could you let Jesus walk right in, or would you rush about?



And I wonder, if the Saviour spent a day or two with you, would you go right on doing the things you always do?

Would you go right on saying the things you always say. Would life continue as it does from day to day?

Would your family conversation keep up its usual pace. And would you find it hard, each meal, to say a table grace?

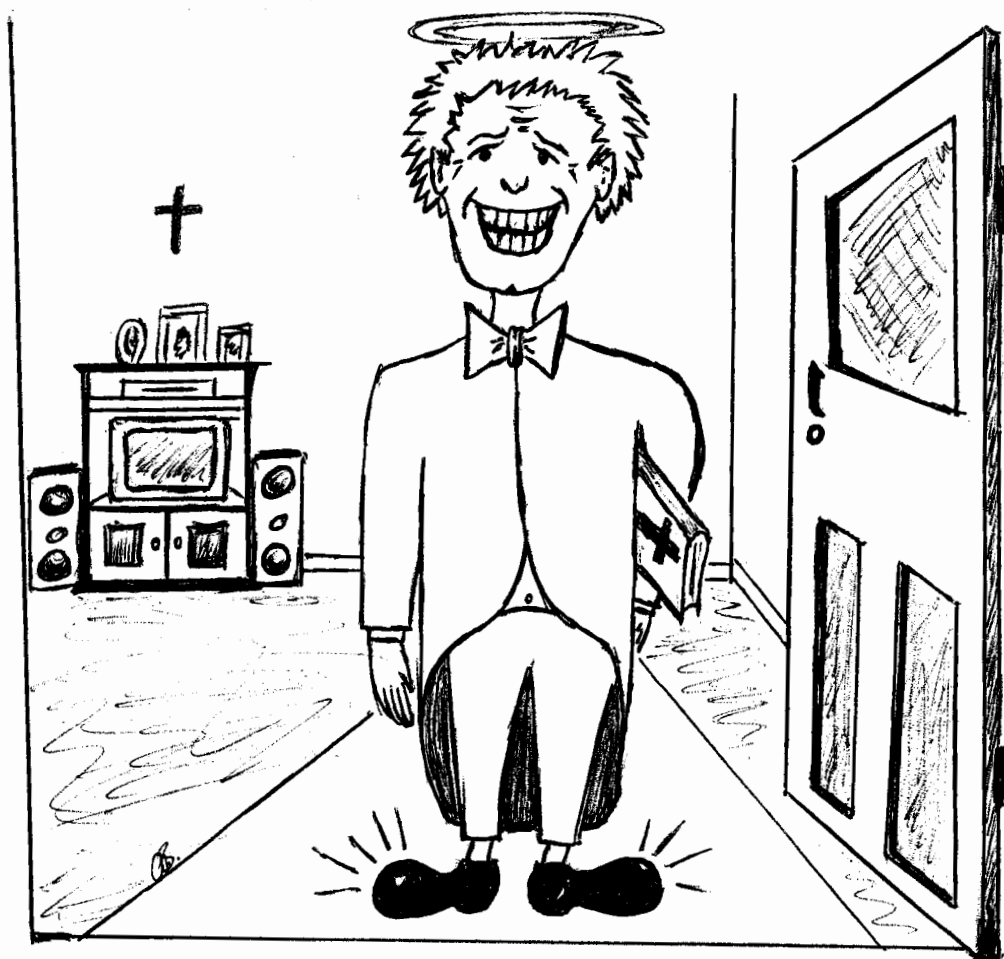
Would you sing the songs you always sing, and read the books you read, and let Him know the things on which your mind and spirit feed?

Would you take Jesus everywhere you'd planned to go, or maybe you'd change your plans for just a day or so?...

Would you be glad to have Him meet your very closest friends, or hope that they would stay away until His visit ends?

Would you be glad to have Him stay forever on and on - or would you sigh with great relief, when He at last had gone?

It might be interesting to know the things you'd do, if Jesus came in person to spend some time with you.



# BOOK REVIEW:

## The Living God - A Catechism, Vols. 1 & 2

by Barry Judge

What is most significant about this catechism, or rather this major catechetical work, is without any question its essentially ecclesial nature. This work represents a most timely witness, one that appears as a moment when the mystery of the church is so often neglected in the west. The western church is more concerned with stressing a conscious and personal faith. Its basic emphasis is upon the encounter with Jesus who reveals to us God's own being. Orthodoxy insists upon the vital content, or more exactly the ontological (mystery-metaphysics) content of this encounter. It insists upon the life in Christ as a true participation in divine energies.

For orthodox tradition there is no difference between the body of the risen Christ and His eucharistic body. That is, the church in its two-fold nature, spiritual and sacramental. The Eucharist constitutes the Church more surely, more essentially, than any of its sociological aspects in and through the Eucharist, the Church becomes a chalice from which flows the power of the resurrection "For the Life of the World".

This catechism is first of all ecclesial in the very way that it has been constructed. It is the fruit of the common labours and common experience of a number of teachers of catechism in several French Orthodox Parishes from Paris to Marseilles, parishes that follow the Byzantine rite. Its authors were all French, even though some were Russian origin, others of Greek origin, and still others of French background who had entered the Orthodox Church.

The Ecclesial aspect of this catechism becomes apparent particularly in its

content. It has been organised rather like an iconostasis, or rather like those icons of the great feasts of the liturgical year that one sees on many iconostases just above the Royal Doors. It is essentially marked by the rhythm of the gospels themselves, if its true, as many exegetes think, that the gospels are recitations of the death and the resurrection of the Lord, preceded by longer or shorter introductions.

The present work like those festal icons, concerns basically the great period of fifty days which extends from the outpouring of Christ's blood to the outpouring of the Spirit. The movement that leads us from the Paschal mystery through the great blessing of Christ as He ascends to the right hand of the Father.

These notes are from the preface of Volume 1 "The Living God". Volume 1 and 2 are known as "A Catechism for the Christian Faith". They were first published in French and were translated in 1989 by Olga Dunlop.

We are both blessed and privileged to be able to read these works because they give us a brief history of the journey of Christ from birth to resurrection.

Volume 1 starts with "The nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ (from old Adam to new Adam) and concludes with "The Cross and the Resurrection". Volume 2 starts with "Ascension and Pentecost (the new era of the Church) and concludes with "The Second Coming and the Life of the World to Come".

The format of the books are novel and interesting. They use a question and answer technique. The questions are asked by a

“seeker”, ourselves, and are answered by a “sage” your priest or spiritual adviser. Some of the answers you may not agree with but do not be distressed, if you are in doubt ask your priest.

Some of the questions were:

*“Then what was there in the beginning, the very beginning?”*

*“Will we know God perfectly at the end of the world?”*

*“Have there ever been men who were like God?”*

I found the discussion on the creation very informative. They state that we are in the eighth day of creation. Interesting!

There is a discussion on many of the icons, many in colour in relation to the event they portray. A detailed description of some of them.

There is a spiritual rewarding theme throughout the books and that is on “deification, the act of making divine of participating in the divine nature” ie “God became man so that man might become God”.

Rejoice, O Isaiah!

A Virgin is with Child

And shall bear a son Emmanuel,

Both God and man,

And Orient is His name.

Magnifying Him, we call the Virgin blessed

At once God and man:

This is the whole meaning of the incarnation. The Virgin has become united to God by becoming his mother. In the image of Mary we accept and receive God, for God also becomes incarnate in us, through the Holy Spirit. The aim of the Christian, of his struggle against sin to obtain God’s pardon, is to allow the incarnation of The Word in his life - even in his body - to become apparent.

This theme is continued throughout the book, and remember, this is what our faith is based on, Christ in us - the birth, the crucifixion and the resurrection.

CAT INT 11A      The Living God Volume 1

CAT INT 11B      The Living God Volume 1

CAT INT 27A      The Living God Volume 2

CAT INT 27B      The Living God Volume 2

All are published by St Vladimir’s Press

*Through God’s Grace The Library is Your Choice - Use It.*

## *Where is the Library?*

*Your library is situated upstairs in the*

*Greek Orthodox  
Community of St. George  
Administration, Welfare  
and Respite Building,  
36 Browning Street,  
South Brisbane.*



## *When can I access the Library?*

*...every Saturday night  
after the English Liturgy*



# THE BIBLE...

## *What about all those contradictions?*

People ask this question so often it amazes me. The question assumes that the Bible is filled with so many obvious discrepancies it would be impossible to believe it has a divine origin. It is a popular idea to maintain that the Bible disagrees with itself, and so, unfortunately, casts considerable doubt on its own trustworthiness.

If, indeed, the Bible does contain demonstrable errors, it would show that at least those parts could not have come from a perfect, all-knowing God. We do not argue with this conclusion, but we do disagree with the initial premise that the Scriptures are full of mistakes.

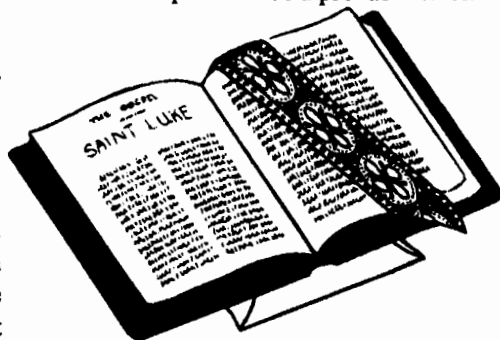
It is easy to accuse the Bible of inaccuracies, but it is quite another matter to prove it.

Certain passages at first glance can appear to be contradictory, but further investigation will show this is not the case.

One of the things for which we appeal with regard to possible contradictions is fairness. We should not minimize or exaggerate the problem, and we must always begin by giving the author the benefit of the doubt. This is the rule in other literature, and we ask that it also be the rule here. So often people want to employ a different set of rules in examining the Bible, and to this we immediately object.

What constitutes a contradiction? The law of non-contradiction, which is the basis of all logical thinking, states that a thing cannot be both *a* and *non-a* at the same time, in the same place, and in the same manner. It cannot be both raining and not raining at the same time in the same location.

If one can demonstrate a violation of this principle from Scripture, then and only then can he prove a contradiction. For example, if the Bible said - which it does not - that Jesus died by crucifixion both at Jerusalem and at Nazareth at the same time, this would be a provable error.



When facing possible contradictions, it is important to remember that two statements can differ from each other without being contradictory. Some people fail to make a

distinction between contradiction and difference.

Take, for example, the case of the blind men at Jericho. Matthew relates how two blind men met Jesus, while both Mark and Luke mention only one. However, neither of these statements denies the other. Rather they are complementary.

Suppose you talk to the mayor of your city and the chief of police at city hall. Later, you see your friend, Jim, and tell him you talked to the mayor today. An hour after

that, you see another friend, John, and tell him you talked to both the mayor and the chief of police.

Your friends compare notes, and there seems to be a contradiction - but there is not. Since you had not told Jim you talked *only* to the mayor, you did not contradict what you told John.

The statements you made to Jim and John were different, not contradictory. Many biblical statements fall into this category, and people sometimes think they find errors in passages when actually they simply do not read the passages correctly.

In the Book of Judges we have the account of the death of Sisera. Judges 5:25-27 is supposed to represent Jael as having slain him with her hammer and tent peg while he was drinking milk. Judges 4:21 says she did it while he was asleep. However, a closer reading of the Judges 5 passage reveals that it does not state he was drinking milk at the moment of impact - and the discrepancy disappears.

Sometimes two passages appear contradictory because the translation is not as accurate as it could be. A knowledge of the original languages of the Bible can immediately solve these difficulties, for both Greek and Hebrew - as all languages - have peculiarities that are difficult to render into English or any other language.

A classic example concerns the accounts of Paul's conversion recorded in the Book of Acts. Acts 9:7 (KJV) states: "The men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man." Acts 22:9 (KJV) reads: "And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of Him that spake to me."

These statements seem contradictory, with one saying Paul's companions heard a voice and the other saying no voice was heard. However, a knowledge of Greek solves this difficulty. As the Greek scholar, W.F. Arndt, explains:

The construction of the verb "to hear" (akouo) is not the same in both accounts. In Acts 9:7 it is used with the genitive, in Acts 22:9 with the accusative. The construction with the genitive simply expresses that something is being heard or that certain sounds reach the ear; nothing is indicated as to whether a person understands what he hears or not.

The construction with the accusative, however, describes a hearing which includes mental apprehension of the message spoken. From this it becomes evident that the two passages are not contradictory.

Acts 22:9 does not deny that the associates of Paul heard certain sounds; it simply declares that they did not hear in such a way as to understand what was being said. Our English idiom in this case simply is not so expressive as the Greek.

It also must be stressed that when a possible explanation is given to a Bible difficulty, it is unreasonable to state that the passage contains a demonstrable error. Some difficulties in Scripture result from our inadequate knowledge about the circumstances, and only prove that we are ignorant of the background. As historical and archaeological studies proceed, new light is being shed on difficult portions of Scripture and many "errors" have disappeared with the new understanding. We need a wait-and-see attitude on the problems.

(Taken from *A Ready Defense* by Josh MacDowell pp126-128)



# WEB SITE - ONLINE

Thanks largely to the efforts of Fr Dimitri Tsakas, the Web Site for the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia Fourth Archdiocesan District of Queensland is now online. It provides news and information regarding the Greek Orthodox Parishes of Queensland and also has hyper-links to some of the best Orthodox Sites in the world.

The URL is **<http://www.go4ad.org.au>**.

*Happy Surfing!*

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✦ **Thank You!** ✦

*A sincere thank you to all of you who were able to respond to our request for financial help. Your generosity is most appreciated. It has made a big difference to the continuation of our ministry. Keep us in your prayers.*

*May the Lord bless you all.*

# WHAT IS THE ORTHODOX CHURCH?

The Orthodox Church is the Church founded by Jesus Christ and described throughout the New Testament. All other Christian Churches and sects can be traced back historically to the Orthodox Church.

The word Orthodox literally means "right teaching" or "right worship". As the encroachments of false teaching and division multiplied in early Christian times, threatening to obscure the identity and purity of the Church, the term "Orthodox" quite logically came to be applied to it. The Orthodox Church is the continuation of early Christianity and remains faithful to the teachings of the early Church. It is the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ.

# WHAT IS MEANT BY SALVATION?

Salvation is the divine gift through which human beings are delivered from sin and death, united to Christ, and brought into His eternal kingdom. Those who heard the Apostle Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost asked what they must do to be saved. He answered, **"Repent, and let every one of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"** (Acts 2:38). Salvation begins with these three 'steps' 1 Repent 2 Be baptised, and 3 Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. To **repent** means to change our mind about how we have lived our lives, turning from our sin and committing ourselves to Christ. To be **baptised** means to be born from above by being joined to Christ. (If one is baptised as an infant, repentance and confession can reunite one with Christ. Second baptisms are wrong). And to **receive the gift of the Holy Spirit** means to receive the Spirit who empowers us to enter a new life in Christ, to be nurtured in the Church, and to grow in God's image.

Salvation demands faith in Jesus Christ. People cannot save themselves by their own good works. Salvation is "faith working through love". It is an ongoing, life-long process. Salvation is past tense in that, through the death and resurrection of Christ, we have been saved. It is present tense, for we are also being saved through our active participation in the Church's life. Salvation is also future, for we must yet be saved at Christ's glorious Second Coming.